



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 2123rd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 5 February 2025, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Haidar

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Seventh periodic report of Nepal (continued) (CEDAW/C/NPL/7; CEDAW/C/NPL/Q/7; CEDAW/C/NPL/RQ/7)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Nepal joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair** invited the delegation of Nepal to continue replying to the Committee members' questions.

Articles 10–14

3. **A representative of Nepal**, resuming his delegation's replies to questions raised at the previous meeting (CEDAW/C/SR.2122), said that ensuring access to education for marginalized communities, including children with disabilities, was a priority under the Compulsory and Free Education Act. Education law and policy promoted inclusive education, as well as the continued provision of special education until mainstream schools became fully inclusive. The Government offered scholarships and provided educational materials free of charge to children from disadvantaged communities and children with disabilities. Under a recent directive, some local governments would receive special grants, on top of regular fiscal transfers, for improving school infrastructure and the provision of education to vulnerable groups. Integrated disability rehabilitation programmes were being implemented in four provinces and would be rolled out nationwide in 2026. The Compulsory and Free Education Act also covered issues such as the use of sign language in education to support deaf and hard-of-hearing children. Various provincial policies and programmes had been introduced to combat discrimination in education, including a directive on the empowerment of adolescent girls in Koshi Province and a school infrastructure programme in Karnali Province.

4. **Ms. Tisheva**, noting that there were still significant disparities in labour indicators between women and men and that some 85 per cent of unpaid work, including care work, was reportedly performed by women, said that she would like to know what measures had been taken to address the low representation of women in the workforce, especially in formal employment and leadership positions, and to reduce horizontal and vertical occupational segregation. She would welcome information on the gender pay gap and on the timeline for introducing fully paid maternity leave in all sectors. Would steps be taken under the Sixteenth Periodic Plan to evaluate the extent of unpaid work carried out by women; to promote the equal sharing of care work by women and men, including through awareness-raising aimed at private companies; and to combat gender stereotypes and prejudices?

5. The ban on Nepalese women taking on domestic work in other countries undermined their economic autonomy and increased the likelihood that they would resort to illegal labour migration and suffer exploitation and abuse. She wished to know when the Government intended to repeal the ban, which violated women's right to work and constituted direct discrimination. She would also appreciate information on any measures taken to protect women from online violence and harassment in the context of migration and on the services provided for women returning from work abroad.

6. In view of the information provided in paragraphs 115 and 116 of the State party's replies (CEDAW/C/NPL/RQ/7), she would like to know when the Government would amend the law on sexual harassment in the workplace to ensure access to justice through court proceedings and the provision of legal aid for victims. It would be useful to know how many cases of sexual harassment had been prosecuted in the previous two years and, of those, how many had resulted in a conviction. She wondered when the legal definition of the workplace would be expanded to include places of employment in the informal sector.

7. The Committee would be interested to know what measures would be taken to ensure equal opportunities in the digital economy for women and girls and address the specific needs of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

8. **A representative of Nepal** said that the Labour Act guaranteed equal pay and established workplace protections. Women's integration into the workforce was encouraged through initiatives such as the Prime Minister's Employment Programme and supported by gender-responsive budgeting. The participation of women in politics and government was guaranteed by the Constitution. A number of challenges remained, notwithstanding the progress made in reducing the gender wage gap, promoting equal employment opportunities and decreasing occupational segregation. Initiatives had been undertaken at all levels of government in areas such as auditing, oversight and training to address those challenges. In order to reduce occupational segregation, efforts were being made to expand the provision of vocational training, to promote financial inclusion and to introduce gender-responsive policies.

9. Significant progress had been made in implementing the maternity leave provisions in the Labour Act. Compliance was ensured through inspections, administrative oversight and audits conducted by the federal, provincial and local authorities. Steps had been taken to raise awareness of employers' and employees' rights and obligations in relation to maternity leave. Collaboration with bilateral and international partners played a vital role in strengthening the implementation of the relevant provisions, particularly for informal sector workers. Safeguards were in place to prevent discrimination against women who took maternity leave.

10. Efforts were being made to expand services and support at the local level to ensure that businesses and workers had access to the resources they needed to formalize employment. The Government, employers and trade unions would work together under the National Action Plan for Formalization to improve employment registration procedures, promote skills development and incentivize workers to formalize their employment, with the aim of facilitating the transition of informal workers, especially women migrant workers, into the formal economy. A campaign highlighting the benefits of formal employment would be run with technical assistance from the International Labour Organization (ILO). Workers in the informal sector were also assisted in their transition to formal employment through the social security scheme.

11. The Sixteenth Periodic Plan set out measures to ensure that unpaid care and domestic work were recognized in terms of their economic value and incorporated into gross domestic product calculations. Under the Plan, the care economy would be boosted through investment in formal care services and early childhood programmes, and a national care policy would be introduced to formalize care work and improve working conditions for caregivers. The National Planning Commission had a committee responsible for drafting national care directives.

12. The temporary restriction of domestic work taken on by Nepalese workers in certain countries, which applied to both men and women, was necessary to ensure the safety, dignity and well-being of domestic workers. Reports of human trafficking, exploitation and unsafe working conditions had highlighted the need for stronger safeguards. The Government was working closely with destination countries such as the United Arab Emirates to establish a clear legal framework that guaranteed fair treatment, security and access to legal and physical protection for Nepalese migrant workers. It was also taking steps to promote ethical recruitment procedures and to strengthen consular support for migrant workers.

13. A digital literacy and skills development programme for women and girls had been launched to enhance access to technology, online education and opportunities in sectors such as e-commerce. Steps were being taken to promote the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities, including through the use of assistive technology and the application of accessibility standards for web content. Legislation had been adopted to ensure affordable Internet access for marginalized groups.

14. **A representative of Nepal** said that complaints of sexual harassment in the workplace were handled by the chief district officer of the relevant district. The Government had recently adopted an action plan on business and human rights with a view to improving the protection of human rights in all workplaces. Employment-related measures were also included in the fifth National Human Rights Action Plan and in follow-up to the recommendations made to Nepal during the third cycle of the universal periodic review.

15. **Ms. Tisheva**, stressing the importance of access to justice for victims of sexual harassment in the workplace, said that she would like to know whether complainants could appeal against decisions of chief district officers and bring their cases to court. While she welcomed the steps taken to quantify the unpaid work performed by women, she wondered what was done to ensure that such work was more equally shared between women and men.

16. **A representative of Nepal** said that, while the procedure established in the legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace gave the administrative authorities a chance to deal with complaints at first instance, there was nothing to prevent victims from filing police complaints. Surprisingly, no cases of workplace harassment had been recorded by the few district administration offices that had responded to the Government's request for data. Measures would be taken to raise awareness of the relevant legislation among chief district officers and district administration office staff.

17. To promote the sharing of family responsibilities between women and men, paternity leave had been introduced under the Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act. The Act was applicable not only to the public sector but also to the private and non-governmental sectors. Unfortunately, some fathers were unaware of their rights under the Act and refrained from requesting paternity leave, for fear of losing their jobs.

18. **Ms. Peláez Narváez**, noting the various challenges that the State party continued to face in the field of healthcare, said that she would like to know what measures would be taken to reduce maternal mortality; to improve menstrual hygiene management; to protect women from sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS; and to increase access to contraceptives. She wondered what would be done to ensure that all women and girls had effective access to affordable, inclusive and accessible healthcare services, including maternity, family planning and reproductive health services, regardless of their nationality, income or other status. She would like information on any steps that would be taken to combat discrimination and ill-treatment, including obstetric violence, against women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, sex workers and Indigenous women.

19. Abortion services were often not accessible or affordable, or were not provided in accordance with the principle of free, prior and informed consent. Moreover, in the Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act, article 15, on safe abortion, was at variance with article 189 of the Penal Code. She wished to know what steps would be taken to harmonize those two pieces of legislation, to prohibit sex-selective abortion and to ensure access to abortion for women from disadvantaged groups. The Committee would also like to know whether there were plans to criminalize forced medical interventions on intersex persons and the forced sterilization of women with disabilities and to provide reparation to the victims of such practices. What measures would be taken to enforce the principle of free, prior and informed consent in all healthcare settings? She would like to learn more about the mental health and suicide prevention services available to women.

20. **A representative of Nepal** said that, according to the 2021 demographic and health survey, the maternal mortality ratio had decreased significantly in recent decades, to 239 deaths per 100,000 live births. Nepal had been awarded a Millennium Development Goals Award for improving maternal health.

21. **A representative of Nepal** said that steps were taken to increase access to free maternal healthcare and family planning services in order to further reduce the maternal mortality rate. However, the effectiveness of those steps was hindered by insufficient funding, administrative inefficiencies and local resistance to change in some communities.

22. The Government had recently launched a programme to vaccinate over 17 million girls and women against the human papillomavirus. In rural areas, women's access to healthcare services was frequently hampered by the lack of transportation and inadequate infrastructure. The Government was making efforts to overcome those problems in coordination with provincial and local administrations and United Nations bodies such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

23. A number of healthcare programmes had been launched to benefit the general population and specific groups, including a family planning programme, a safe motherhood

programme, a safe abortion programme and a reproductive health programme for adolescent boys and girls. A programme to construct at least one 15-bed hospital in each of some 650 municipalities was currently being implemented.

24. Under the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act, all pregnant women had the right to have an abortion until the twelfth week of pregnancy. Between the thirteenth and twenty-fifth weeks, women could have an abortion if the pregnancy posed a risk to their health and an abortion had been recommended by a doctor. After the twenty-fifth week of pregnancy, abortion was permissible only if the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest. Safe abortion services were available in all of the country's seven provinces.

25. The Government had launched a programme to expand the availability of treatment for infertility, including assisted reproductive technology, in urban and rural areas. Counselling services were incorporated into reproductive health programmes in order to support women who had difficulty conceiving. In that connection, healthcare staff were trained to provide emotional support and guidance to such women. Efforts were made to tackle preventable factors that contributed to infertility, such as untreated infections, lack of access to healthcare and environmental factors. Steps were taken to increase access to contraception, safe abortion services and timely treatment for infections like sexually transmitted diseases and pelvic inflammatory diseases. Certain non-governmental organizations contributed to the provision of healthcare for persons belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community and other minority groups.

26. **A representative of Nepal** said that measures were taken to bring the Penal Code into alignment with the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act. The drafting of amendments of the Penal Code was almost complete and the proposals would be submitted to the Council of Ministers before being submitted to the parliament. Guidelines had been issued to ensure the management of dignified menstruation and modules on sexual and reproductive health had been incorporated into the school curriculum.

27. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** said that it was still not clear whether the Government would prohibit the invasive treatment of intersex persons, including children, and the forced sterilization of woman and girls with disabilities. She wondered what measures would be taken to ensure that healthcare authorities were required to obtain women's free and informed consent prior to undertaking any medical treatment on them, including abortions.

28. **A representative of Nepal** said that a dedicated section had been established within the Department of Health Services to provide medication and assistive devices to persons with disabilities. The Social Service Unit Programme provided access to free healthcare services for 12 target groups, including women and girls with disabilities.

29. **Ms. Jarbussynova**, noting that a range of obstacles continued to hinder women's access to property ownership, banking services, loans and social security benefits. She wished to know how the Government monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of laws and policies intended to eliminate discrimination in economic and social life. She wondered what steps were taken to enforce women's right to inheritance and property and to prevent financial institutions from engaging in gender-based discrimination, especially in relation to applications for loans.

30. It would be interesting to know how the Government guaranteed equal access to financial resources for women in marginalized communities and what mechanisms existed to ensure that financial empowerment programmes for women reached the most disadvantaged groups. She would be grateful to hear about any steps taken to provide widows and single mothers with the family benefits to which they were entitled. The Committee would appreciate details of any obstacles that prevented women, including those working in the informal sector, from gaining access to maternity and social security benefits. How did the Government ensure that rural women were aware of, and could easily access, family benefits and financial credit, and how did it ensure their right to own property?

31. She wished to know what reforms were undertaken to increase women's ownership of property and to facilitate their access to mortgages. Information on any steps taken to guarantee married women's equal enjoyment of property rights would also be welcome. How

would the Government ensure that family benefits, pensions and social security payments reached the women for whom they were intended rather than male family members?

32. **A representative of Nepal** said that the Government had reduced taxes applied to the transfer of property from parents to their offspring and to women property owners. As a result, the number of women who owned land in urban areas had increased. Steps were taken to encourage persons working in the informal sector to register with the Social Security Fund.

33. Although the procedure for applying for a bank loan was the same for women as for men, women generally found it more difficult to obtain loans. In response to that situation, the Government had adopted strategies to facilitate women's access to credit at lower interest rates. The Central Bank of Nepal encouraged the banking sector to set up savings programmes for women and to enhance the financial independence of women in rural areas through the provision of microfinancing and the establishment of cooperatives.

34. Under the Industrial Enterprise Act of 2016, women entrepreneurs were exempt from paying registration fees and income tax and were offered incentives to set up businesses inside industrial estates, including reduced fees for the registration of industries and trademarks. The Government had launched a number of programmes to promote women's economic empowerment, including the President Woman Upliftment Programme, which facilitated women's access to loans and microfinance. Under the Microenterprise Development Programme, support had been provided to 90,000 entrepreneurs, 70 per cent of whom were women. A subsidized loan scheme for women entrepreneurs had been launched by the Ministry of Industry.

35. **Ms. Al-Shukairi** said that she wished to know how the needs of rural women were addressed in policies, programmes and decision-making processes relating to land allocation, food security, climate change and disaster mitigation. She wondered what measures had been implemented to ensure women's equal access to credit and other forms of financial support and to enhance their financial literacy.

36. She would welcome information on any steps taken to develop women-friendly agricultural technologies and tools that saved time and reduced the amount of physical labour undertaken by women farmers. Details of any plans to establish local learning centres where rural women could enhance their understanding of key policies, programmes and development plans would be welcome. It would be interesting to know what impact empowerment programmes had in narrowing gender gaps in economic participation in rural areas, especially in households living below the poverty line. What steps were taken to address regional disparities that might affect women's ability to benefit from such programmes?

37. Given that Indigenous women experienced exclusion and discrimination and were not recognized as a distinct group in the Constitution, it would be interesting to know whether any plans were in place to amend the Constitution to align it with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. She wished to know what measures had been taken to collect data disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, geographical location and other relevant factors to enhance understanding of the challenges facing Indigenous women and girls.

38. She would appreciate information on any plans in place to recognize Indigenous women as a distinct group in law and policy in order to ensure their meaningful representation and participation and to enable targeted measures to be taken to address their vulnerabilities. The Committee would like to find out what steps were taken to secure Indigenous women's access to and control over agricultural land, forests and fisheries and to ensure their freedom to undertake their traditional occupations. What measures were planned to ensure climate justice for Indigenous women living in climate-vulnerable areas?

39. She wondered what measures had been implemented to enforce the Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act of 2011 and whether those measures had helped to change attitudes toward Dalit women. She would appreciate information on any plans to ensure that police officers and justice officials were able to protect the rights of victims of caste-based discrimination and to provide them with proper reparations, where appropriate.

40. **A representative of Nepal** said that the President Woman Upliftment Programme had been launched by the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens in 2017 to provide employment and training to marginalized women, including Dalit, Indigenous and Muslim women in the 30 districts with the lowest women's development index. The Programme, which had been rolled out in all 77 districts, focused on promoting economic empowerment by enhancing living standards, ensuring access to finance and stimulating entrepreneurship. It also included campaigns to combat gender-based discrimination and violence and to provide rescue and rehabilitation services to survivors of gender-based violence. Under the Programme, maternal healthcare services had been provided to over 700 pregnant women living in remote areas.

41. **A representative of Nepal** said that a number of programmes had been launched to increase financial literacy and security among rural women. In Karnali Province, for instance, bank accounts were opened in girls' names when their births were registered. The provincial government transferred 500 rupees into the accounts every month for up to 20 years in order to support the girls' education and ensure their well-being. Under another scheme, measures were taken to make it more affordable for women to register land in their name. Under a project launched by the Prime Minister, equipment was provided to rural women, including small trailers and greenhouse tunnels for growing produce.

42. Groups in which women could come together to share information and find solutions to problems, and which were visited and provided with useful information by agricultural officers, had been formed at the community level, and units had been set up where women could obtain information about and discuss agriculture and land use. The new, progressive Constitution adopted in 2015 was aimed, inter alia, at ending all forms of discrimination, exploitation and injustice based on religion, culture, caste, traditional practices and other grounds; it was aimed at building an equitable society and had contributed to the social inclusion of women and the safeguarding of their rights. Many court cases related to those rights were currently under way and levels of discrimination and impunity had fallen significantly. Under the National Gender Equality Policy, 2027 and an associated action plan, an inclusive gender perspective had successfully been introduced, placing emphasis on the importance of addressing gender equality in all areas, including through the empowerment and mainstreaming of Indigenous women.

43. While the State did not have any legislation that specifically addressed the situation of Indigenous women or women with disabilities, it did have various laws which were contributing indirectly to its implementation of general recommendation No. 39 (2022). The National Inclusion Commission and the Indigenous Nationalities Commission worked to protect Indigenous women's rights. The Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives was a member of an Indigenous community. A quota had been established for the participation of Indigenous women in provincial and local governments and was contributing to the increased representation of Indigenous women in the parliament. The Provincial Civil Service Act and the Federal Civil Service Bill also provided for quotas for persons from Indigenous groups.

44. The Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens was in the process of implementing the Social Information Management System, which would be used to gather data from all 754 local governments. A database management system would be established in the near future and disaggregated data on groups such as Indigenous women and women with disabilities would thus soon be available.

45. Many local businesses were contributing to efforts to improve access to and control of land and resources for Indigenous women. Homestays operated by Indigenous women were helping them to become economically independent.

46. **Ms. Al-Shukairi** said that she would be grateful to receive more information about the National Adaptation Plan. Specifically, she wished to find out how it was intended to address the disproportionately negative impact of climate change on women. She would like to know what steps were taken to revise measures, laws and plans for combating climate change, with a view to ensuring that women, especially Indigenous women, participated fully and effectively in developing, implementing and monitoring climate change initiatives. It would be interesting to learn how the plan recognized the crucial role performed by such

women as caretakers of traditional knowledge and agents of change. The Committee would welcome further details on the adaptive measures that had been implemented to enhance women's capacity to contribute to climate change mitigation efforts, such as through the use of climate-smart agriculture, artificial intelligence tools or renewable energy and the development of environment skills, and how those measures were helping to strengthen women's leadership in building climate-resilient communities and managing climate-related change.

47. **Ms. Akizuki** said that it would be useful to learn whether a system was planned for collecting disaggregated data on lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women in order to inform policy decisions and track progress made in improving their socioeconomic status. She wondered whether there were any initiatives for enacting and enforcing comprehensive anti-discrimination laws that specifically addressed their rights.

48. **A representative of Nepal** said that most Indigenous women lived in the uplands of the country, which were the areas most affected by climate change. Measures to mitigate such effects were being implemented under the National Adaptation Plan, and the Government was seeking to develop means to adequately fund such efforts. The Government had formulated a plan for its Nationally Determined Contribution 3.0, which also included adaptive and protective mitigation measures, in close consultation with the stakeholders directly affected by climate change. The country's contribution to climate change was far smaller than the effects of climate change that it had to face.

49. Data on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons community was being gathered in the Social Information Management System and would be utilized by the Government. Nepal had been the second country in Asia to register same-sex marriages. The Government recognized the community and consulted closely with it, with a view to addressing issues that it faced.

50. **A representative of Nepal** said that, with the National Census conducted in 2021, the Government had made a first attempt to determine the number of persons from sexual and gender minorities. It had estimated that 0.01 per cent of the population belonged to such a minority. While the Government had not yet gathered or received data specifically regarding lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, it acknowledged the importance of doing so and would consider taking such steps.

51. **Ms. Hacker** said that she would welcome clarification on the circumstances and eligibility criteria for legal aid and whether such aid included assistance in negotiation and representation in court, or only consultation. She wondered whether the Government knew the percentage of women involved in legal proceedings, especially criminal and family-law proceedings, who were not represented by a lawyer and how women, especially Dalit women and women from other marginalized communities, learned about the right to legal aid. It would be useful to hear whether legal aid providers were required to undergo gender-sensitive training and attend awareness-raising programmes focused on women's rights, and whether legal aid was provided through a gender lens in any other respects. The Committee wished to know what steps were taken to give targeted support to provide access to free legal aid for marginalized women who were facing intersectional forms of discrimination, such as sex workers and migrant women. Were non-citizens also eligible for legal aid, and if so, in what circumstances?

52. She would be grateful if the State party could outline the concrete measures it was taking to identify and address barriers to effective implementation of its prohibition on child marriage, especially among marginalized, disadvantaged, poor, rural, Muslim and Dalit women, and if it could inform the Committee of indicators of the success of that prohibition. Only 52 cases of child marriage had reportedly been handled by the police force in the 2022/23 fiscal year. She wished to know how the significant gap between the widespread prevalence of child marriage and the low rate of enforcement could be explained. It would be helpful to learn what the State party had done to protect children who entered into marriage from prosecution and whether persons under the age of 20 who entered into marriage were in fact prosecuted. She wondered what steps the State party had taken or planned to take to eliminate the practice of dowry.

53. It would be helpful to receive clarification about the legal status of same-sex marriage and marriages involving lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and to hear why such marriages were recorded in a separate register. She wished to know whether it was the case that same-sex couples were not granted the same legal rights and recognition as opposite-sex couples with respect to inheritance, tax benefits and the adoption of children. It would be useful to learn what steps the State party had taken to protect inter-caste couples, especially those involving Dalit persons, from violence and social backlash; why the provisions of the National Civil Code according to which women who gave birth were automatically married to the child's father had not yet been repealed; and what steps had been taken to enforce prohibitions of unregistered and polygamous marriages and to protect the rights of women in such marriages and upon their dissolution. Did the Government plan to require the registration of all marriages, including religious and customary unions?

54. She would be grateful to learn what steps the State party had taken or planned to take with a view to eliminating discrimination and ensuring equality in determining the surnames and addresses of women and children. The Committee would be interested to know why the right of a mother to custody of her children was conditional on her not remarrying and whether the Government planned to repeal that discriminatory and harmful legal provision. She wondered why the grounds for divorce without mutual consent were different for men and women and why the property rights of women were contingent on their behaviour in divorce cases. What did the State party plan to do to ensure equality in the rights to divorce and to property upon separation? What measures had it taken to ensure that the equal right of men and women to inherit property, including land, was fully enforced, particularly in the case of women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women?

55. **A representative of Nepal** said that the Legal Aid Act of 1997, which had been amended a number of times, the Constitution and other laws provided that free legal aid was available to indigent persons, victims of domestic violence, children, older persons and victims of conflict. Following the adoption in 2019 of the Integrated Legal Aid Policy, a new legal aid bill was currently being drafted. Consultations on the bill would soon be undertaken with provincial and local representatives; it was hoped that the new law would provide broader eligibility for vulnerable people, under less stringent criteria. In addition to counselling, legal aid encompassed the preparation of relevant documentation, the presentation of cases before the court and assistance in gaining access to various administrative services and bodies. The Government hoped to extend its scope to include additional services. The Government conducted programmes to increase awareness of the law among the population, including educational measures for school students and a media programme disseminating information on the radio about national laws and on how to obtain access to legal aid and to exercise fundamental rights. While there was no specific law that granted non-citizens access to legal aid, the Government recognized that such aid was a basic human right.

56. Although it was a criminal offence to marry under the age of 20, the law was currently under review. It had been proposed that the offence should be divided into three categories of severity: marriage under the age of 16, marriage between the ages of 16 and 18 and marriage between the ages of 18 and 20 years, and that the penalties applied should vary accordingly.

57. Pursuant to the National Civil Code, all marriages had to be registered, with no discrimination on grounds of sex. Same-sex marriages were currently recorded in a different register, not because they were less valid than other marriages, but because they were registered pursuant to a decision of the Supreme Court and a legal instrument for their institutionalization had not yet been adopted. Existing laws were currently being assessed with a view to reforming them to ensure that the rights of same-sex couples were protected.

58. The law that provided for the automatic marriage after childbirth of an unmarried mother to the father was in place to protect women from being abandoned by the father. It applied only to women over 20 years of age. It did not force women into marriage, as they could decline the marriage, for instance by claiming that the relationship had not been voluntary or consensual. Men and women, including persons with disabilities, enjoyed equal rights with respect to parental and other property. The practice of dowry was harmful and had been criminalized in Nepal.

59. **Ms. Hacker** said that, given that practices such as dowry and polygamy persisted despite being criminalized, she wished to know what steps the Government planned to take to enforce their prohibition and to raise public awareness about their illegality.

60. **A representative of Nepal** said that awareness-raising programmes for the elimination of harmful practices, including programmes for raising awareness of the law, had been carried out with the involvement of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, at both the national and local levels, including in schools. The Government was committed to collaborating closely with relevant civil society and other organizations as part of those efforts.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.